

## PASTG News Notes - August 8, 2000

### Next PASTG Meeting:

The Program Administrative Support Task Group will meet in Peoria, September 11-15, 2000. If you have any issues or concerns you would like to see addressed, please contact one of the members listed on the PASTG homepage.

### Secretarial Conference Highlights:

The "Odyssey 2000" meeting in Hunt Valley, Maryland, was an inspiring, informative and motivational experience. Participants were able to select from a number of concurrent sessions, so one could "zero in" on the areas of most interest. Hopefully we will be able to provide highlights of some of these sessions over the next newsletters. This article emphasizes the key statements of general session speakers on the first day of the conference.

Wiz Horner, Deputy Administrator, AFM, provided opening remarks designed to get us thinking about our role within the Agency. He challenged us to contribute to the Agency in new and exciting ways, and to develop our own job satisfaction by:

- committing fully to our jobs
- accepting uncertainty and ambiguity (He told us to take risks.)
- speeding up -- developing a sense of urgency and action
- taking the initiative to cut costs and improve productivity
- being accountable
- adding value-- prove our worth to the organization (make them see something important would be lost if we left)
- bringing something to the job
- managing our own morale (a positive attitude is contagious)
- getting involved in special projects
- being a "fixer" not a "finger pointer"
- welcoming problems as a way to grow

Sandy Miller Hays, Director, Information Staff, presented "Representing ARS: Meeting the Challenge." She emphasized that we are the first impression to the media, as well as tax payers. Once we have given a bad impression to the media, it is very difficult to turn that impression around to a better one. Sandy had the following tips for secretaries:

- be knowledgeable of your FULL organization
- be in tune with what is done at our location and WRITE IT DOWN. It is much easier to keep stories accurate.
- read over new articles - Do they make sense?
- use bullet statements - keep it simple
- four points: "The four best things are..."
- stick to our area of expertise ("No comment" is NOT a good idea.)
- NEVER say, "Off the record..."
- If you give out incorrect information - FIX IT NOW! Treat it like a national emergency.
- ARS is a great place to work - catch the excitement.
- Take a picture. Put it in the newspaper or on the web. Get the story out.

- If you are ever in doubt about whether information should be given out, or whether it is a major news source, contact Sandy Miller Hays at 301-504-1636 or email her at [shays@asrr.arsusda.gov](mailto:shays@asrr.arsusda.gov)
- <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services> is a great resource for images that can be used in ARS publications, etc.

From Lonajeane Strickland: I attended the Odyssey 2000 Meeting in Baltimore, MD the first week of May. I wish every one of you could have attended. It was an awesome meeting! The speakers were great, the facilities were wonderful, our booth and representation from the Midwest was something to brag about. The topics were very thought provoking. We were told to prepare ourselves for changing times and changes in our professional field. "To step outside our comfort zones for the betterment of ourselves". Any changes that we can make professionally can only help each one of us personally and vice versa. Whether it's education, organization skills or interpersonal relations, let each of us take this challenge to heart. I encourage each of us to challenge ourselves today to prepare for tomorrow.

Dr. Horn was very proud of our accomplishments throughout the week we were in Maryland. He was so impressed, he plans to sponsor another meeting in the next couple of years. If each of us take improvement steps now, we will be so much more successful. Just think of the dynamic changes we will have made and the impact that will be felt at our next meeting.

#### QUOTES TO LIVE BY:

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life, you will have been all of these. -- George Washington Carver

#### TIMESAVING IDEAS:

- Make lists and worksheets on your computer for easy changes and make them workable for you.
- Program speed dials on your phone and keep frequently used numbers near the phone.
- Color code, including forms.
- Learn to cut and paste.
- Save frequently.
- Put things away.
- Write yourself notes and place them where you can see them easily.

The following bookmarks were written by Diane Cronk. They were printed and distributed from the MWA booth to conference participants.

***Every Office Needs One ...***  
*It's amazing and incredible,*  
*But it's as true as it can be,*  
*Every office needs a secretary*  
*Now that's clear to you and me.*

***Office Survival Kit***  
*Be Courteous*  
*Have pride in yourself*  
*Do a kind deed for someone*  
*Listen to your heart*  
*Have patience*

*Courageous and undaunting  
With steadfast valor we proceed  
We take on each perplexing task  
To meet each office need.*

*Perseverance and so savvy  
Lots of patience lots of grace  
Innovative and dependable  
Our smiles light up the place.*

*Challenging, yet rewarding  
Diligently working every day,  
Dedicated and reliable,  
We're proud to work for the USDA!*

*Smile  
Give thanks for each new day  
Welcome challenges  
Take time to enjoy life  
When you lose, don't lose the lesson  
Keep a sense of humor  
Respect self  
Be patient  
Smile often  
Strive always for quality  
Say something kind  
Have fun life is for real  
Bend, but don't break  
Remain calm  
Hum an old song when you feel weary  
Remember it's okay to cry  
Learn to laugh at yourself  
Don't let go of your values  
Respect others  
Have lots of patience  
Smile real often  
Feel the comfort of good times  
Believe in Yourself  
Be thankful for all you have  
Be exceptionally patient  
Smile, Smile, Smile*

Changing Faces in the MWA:

Dr. Michael (Mickey) McGuire

Dr. Mickey McGuire, Research Leader for Bioactive Agents Research (BAR) and Acting Assistant Area Director, has accepted a position in Shafter, CA as Research Leader for the Western Integrated Cropping Systems Research Unit. Dr. Pat Dowd is presently Acting Research Leader for BAR.

Kathy John

Kathy John, NCAUR Personnel Assistant, recently joined ARS in September 1999. Previously she worked eleven years for the U. S. Army Recruiting Battalion as the Chief of Advertising and Public Affairs until the office closed down in 1991 during a major reorganization. She worked a couple of years as an Account Executive for Multi-Ad Services until she was able to find another federal position. Just prior to coming to ARS, Kathy worked five years as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service in Peoria. Kathy said she enjoyed working outdoors (majority of the time), but the back muscles just couldn't tolerate the weight of the mail satchel. She and her husband, Roger, both enjoy the outdoors. They do a lot of bicycling, running, canoeing, snowshoeing, hiking, camping, and gardening. They just returned from a week-long bicycle ride across the state of Wisconsin. Two years ago, they got married in Australia half-way through a nine-day bicycle ride across New South Wales. Kathy is currently training for the Chicago Marathon.

#### Dr. Andrew Watkins

Dr. Andrew Watkins, Technology Transfer Manager at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), accepted a position as Supervisory Technology Transfer Scientist at the Center for Disease Control (CD) in Atlanta, Georgia. He began his new position on May 8.

Dr. Watkins' wife, Linda, who worked in the Biomaterials Processing Research Unit, has family in the Georgia area. Everyone wishes Andrew and Linda success in their move. Dr. Craig Carriere, Research Leader for the Biomaterials Processing Research Unit (BMPR), is serving as Acting Technology Development Manager.

#### Janice Olson

Janice Olson, secretary to Dr. Keith Murray at the National Animal Disease Center has announced her retirement effective August 2. Janice began her ARS career at NADC in April, 1964 in the steno pool and later became the secretary to Dr. Peter J. Matthews, Head of Animal Services. She was reassigned in 1968 to secretary for Dr. William Monlux, NADC Assistant Director. In the following years, she has served as secretary to the following NADC Directors: Dr. Chester Manthei, Dr. Phillip O'Berry, Dr. Harley Moon, Dr. Thomas Walton and presently Dr. Keith Murray.

After retirement, Janice plans to stay active with a part-time job, home duties, volunteer projects, long walks, reading, and spending time with her eight beautiful grandchildren.

Janice would like to thank all of the wonderful people of NADC, MWA, and ARS for their friendship and team work. She states that she will miss all of us!

#### Teresa Sutton

Teresa Sutton joined NADC on Jan. 31, 2000 as a Program Analyst/Public Relations Officer. Prior to joining NADC, Teresa was a Trial Operations Planning and Support Manager with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. Teresa obtained an Animal Science degree from Iowa State University in December of 1987 and began her career with Pioneer March 1, 1988. While at Pioneer she held several positions in the Research, Information Management, and Supply Management Divisions of the company and pursued a Masters of Business Administration degree. Teresa lives on a farm south of Slater with her husband Chris, son Kyle and daughter Jessica. In addition to working at NADC, she enjoys family activities and riding her horse!

#### BJ Dailey

Barbara (BJ) Dailey has been selected as the Area Budget & Fiscal Officer. BJ began working for ARS as a GS-4 Clerk Typist for the Lexington, KY location in 1986. When the LAO indicated she was going to retire 6 months later, she competed for the position and was selected to fill it. BJ served in the position for 7 years until they were notified that the location was going to be closed and she would be reassigned to Griffin, GA effective November 1994. In January of 1995, she was selected for the LAO position in Lincoln, Nebraska and served in that position until September 1998, when she was selected for the LAO position at Madison, WI. And to quote BJ, "Now, I am here - hopefully for the rest of my career. Kentucky is still 'home'."

Prior to coming on board with ARS, she worked for the University of KY as a Staff Assistant. She wore many other hats during the years while she was raising a family - emergency school teacher

(5 grades in a 1-room school), legal secretary, billing clerk, loan mortgage assistant, school crossing guard, and on and on. She has 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

BJ is looking forward to interacting with the staff at the area office and hopes to constructively contribute to the services provided to all of our customers.

#### Debbie Bitner

Debbie Bitner has accepted the position as the Executive Assistant to the Area Administrative Officer, MWA effective August 13, 2000. Debbie has been the Program Assistant for the Biopolymer Research Unit, National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), Peoria, IL, since 1988. Debbie began her employment through a Limestone High School Co-op Program in 1976 with Heights Finance Corporation. She left that position in 1978 to work at Illinois Mutual Insurance for two years as a claims assistant. In 1980, she moved on to work in the claims department for the HHS/Social Security Administration. Debbie transferred in 1981 to the typing pool at USDA/ARS/NCAUR. In 1985, she left the workforce to take care of her son, Jason. She re-entered the workforce in 1986 as a clerk with the USDOL/Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In 1988, Debbie accepted a transfer as Secretary to the Biopolymer Research Unit. During her career with NCAUR, she has enhanced her skills by taking various college and credit courses including the USDA Graduate School New Leader Program. Debbie brings over 22 years experience to ARS with over 19 years being government service. Some of her notable accomplishments are: 1995 NCAUR Administrative Support Person of the Year, 1996 Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, promoted (from a job audit) in March 1997 to a GS-7 as a Program Assistant and in 1999 an FY-99-1 New Leader Program Graduate. Her husband, Mark works at Mitsubishi Motors Manufacturing and her son, Jason (age 16) attends Limestone Community High School. They enjoy spending their summer vacations and long weekends on their boat.

#### Linda Theesfeld

Linda Theesfeld has been selected as the MWA Real Property Specialist. Linda previously worked in the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research's (NCAUR) Office of the Center Director. She worked with the Technology Development Manager as a Technology Development Assistant.

Her culmination of 17 years of being with ARS has not been continuous. In the late 1960's, Linda began her career as a clerk-typist in the Northern Regional Laboratory's (presently NCAUR) Office of the Center Director. When ARS reorganized in 1972, Linda was selected as secretary for the North Central Regional Administrative Officer. After the birth of her daughter in 1978, Linda resigned to spend time with her newborn. In 1994, Linda returned to NCAUR.

In 1999, Linda completed the USDA Graduate School's Aspiring Leader Program. Her 30-day detail was at the ARS/USDA Administrative Office located at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington.

Linda and her husband, Don, have one child. Their daughter, Michelle, is a senior at the University of Iowa.

#### Rebecca (Becky) Clearwater

Becky Clearwater is currently busy as the Office Automation Assistant in the ARS Administrative

Office, Columbia, MO. Her major responsibilities include processing personnel actions and documents, processing and transmitting time and attendance reports, assisting with the processing and maintaining of travel, assisting with the maintenance of Location personal property, maintaining motor vehicle reports, and providing typing and administrative support.

This position begins her ninth year as a federal government employee. Prior years work experience are with the Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture (Biological Control Lab, in Columbia, MO). Her breaks in service were spent with her children, raising them through their formative years. Becky and her husband owned and operated Great Beginnings Child Development Center for ten years and recently sold it to Easter Seals of Missouri. During that time, they partnered with over 850 families caring for approximately 1200 children. It was a real learning experience for them!

Becky is currently enrolled as a Junior in college courses at Moberly Area Community College and Columbia College where she is working on a degree in Computer Information Technology. She loves every minute of this challenge and is proof that old dogs CAN learn new tricks!

PASTG HOME PAGE It has the answers!

Want to attend a training course, but your unit says they can't afford to let you go? Well, we have just the answer for you!

Fill out the application for the MWA Training Scholarship Program.

Where can I find that, you ask? It is on the PASTG home page, along with a host of other good information. Our address is: [www.mwa.ars.usda.gov/pastg](http://www.mwa.ars.usda.gov/pastg)

Maybe you have a question about policies, or a problem that needs to be solved, and you wonder why no one has ever addressed the issue. Again, your answer is on the PASTG home page! Go to the "Issues, Concerns and Questions" option, and you will find an "Issues" form to fill out and submit. The PASTG and Area Office staff take these forms very seriously and want to use them to make your job easier. Why struggle when you can ask for help?

The PASTG home page also has the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual and a direct link to the RMIS "on-line" manual. Add it to your "favorites" today!

In our last Newsletter, we told you that one of the items discussed at the breakout session at the RL/LAO/Secretarial meeting in Peoria was the benefit of listing the Secretaries of the Midwest Area on the PASTG home page, including their location, email address, phone and fax number, along with areas that they had enough expertise that they would be willing to accept a phone call from another secretary and try to help them out with a question. For example, if you felt comfortable helping others with PowerPoint or graphics, you would indicate that. This page would give you a fast accurate access to phone and email for the MWA secretaries who could help you with your question. Because I didn't receive a lot of answers back, I am once again requesting that you email the following information to Sandy Groneberg ([groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov](mailto:groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov)) to include on the home page. If you prefer not to take any phone calls, you don't need to list areas of expertise, but we would still like to have the rest of the information: name, location, email address, phone and fax number, areas of expertise. I am hoping to get this information on the home page soon, so I would appreciate your response.